

AM I MY SISTER'S  
*Keeper?*

RECLAIMING  
FORMER AND  
INACTIVE  
MEMBERS



SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTIST  
CHURCH

# BEFORE YOU BEGIN

## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

### 1. What are the reasons you are considering a Reclaiming Ministry?

- Do you honestly miss the inactive and former members, or is it merely that the church needs financial support for a special project?
- Consider why *you* attend church. Remember, when you invite women to join you in church again, it is because you want them to benefit from this same community.

### 2. Is your church a safe, healthy place to invite inactive and former members to come back to?

- Do the members and pastor work together toward agreed-upon goals?
- Is there a power struggle in the church?
- Are the members friendly and welcoming to everyone, or only to those who look and act like “good” Seventh-day Adventist Christians?
- Are there opportunities in the church for involvement of returning members, or are church offices “owned” by individuals or cliques in the church?

### 3. How is your own connection with God?

- The women you wish to reclaim need to see Jesus in you.

### 4. Can you offer genuine friendship and love to those who no longer attend church?

- Missing members can tell right away if you truly care about them.

*Women without friends in church are likely to become dropouts.*





# WHY DO WOMEN STOP ATTENDING CHURCH?

Before you begin a Reclaiming Ministry, consider reasons why women no longer attend church. This will help you to prepare reaching out to them.

## WOMEN MAY STOP ATTENDING DUE TO...

- Discouragement, either in their spiritual lives or because of something that has nothing at all to do with the church
- Disputes with other members or with the pastor
- Disagreements over doctrine, church standards, or worship styles
- Hurt feelings
- Divorce or separation from spouse
- Transition to a new stage of life, such as marriage or a new job
- Move to another town with no follow-up between churches
- Their children don't like church
- Lengthy illness, either themselves or a loved one
- Lack of involvement in the church

*Many women stop attending church because church was not a friendly place for them. They were wounded by lack of caring.*

# HOW TO BEGIN A RECLAIMING MINISTRY

## BASIC STEPS:

- Make a list of women who are missing from church.
- Pray over the list.
- Ask God to direct you to the women He wants you to reach out to.
- Talk it over with the pastor and enlist his or her support.
- Obtain church board approval.
- Present the plan of a Reclaiming Ministry to the church body so they will be supportive and will be prepared to see missing members back in church.
- Form a committee to organize and oversee the ministry. Some of the team members, called Mentors, are each responsible for contacting and befriending a woman on the list.
- Reach out to the women on your list in friendship and love.
- Remember: The parable of the lost sheep in Luke 15 illustrates how important a single missing person is to God. Don't allow yourself to be sidetracked from making a connection with the woman you commit to befriending.

*Prayer is the key to a successful Reclaiming Ministry.*







# REACH OUT TO THE WOMEN TO BE RECLAIMED

## THINGS TO REMEMBER AS YOU CONTACT THE WOMEN YOU WISH TO RECLAIM:

- For the initial contact, send or take a small gift such as the General Conference Women's Ministries devotional book or another gift.
- **Smile often and let her know you've missed her.**
- After the first contact, follow up regularly by phone, email, social media, text message, or greeting card. Invite her to lunch at your home or a restaurant.
- Be genuinely interested in her and everything that is important to her, especially her family.
- **Be a good listener. Allow her to talk about herself.**
- The church's Women's Ministries department or the Reclaiming Ministry team should plan social events and small group studies to invite the non-attending women to. The first social event should be away from the church to keep anyone from being uncomfortable.
- Your job is to love your friend and accept her unconditionally.
- Never lecture your friend about her lifestyle or appearance. Remember, lectures will repel; love will win them.
- **Do not betray her confidences.**
- If she is angry at the church or someone in church, don't try to defend anyone. Instead, allow her to vent her anger.
- If she has been hurt, let her know you're sorry. Never try to pretend the offense didn't occur or suggest that she is overreacting. This will invalidate her feelings.
- **Avoid arguing about church doctrines, standards, or anything.**
- **Invite her to participate in community outreach projects and other ministry events.**
- Give your friend to God. It is your job to love her. It is the Holy Spirit's job to convict.

*Loving as Jesus loves means keeping up a friendship with non-attending and former members even if they never return to church.*

# RENEWED COMMITMENT TO CHRIST

## THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN YOUR FRIEND IS READY TO COME BACK TO CHURCH:

1. Offer to pick her up and take her to church.
2. Train church greeters to welcome former and inactive members warmly without questioning them about why they've been absent so long.
3. Invite her to join your Sabbath school class.
4. Sit with her in church.
5. Introduce her to other women who will welcome her and befriend her too.
6. Invite her and her family to your home for Sabbath dinner.
7. Pray for your friend daily and stay in touch with her during the week to keep her encouraged.

*It is critical for returning members to become involved in church life within six weeks of their return.*

*Otherwise, they are not likely to stay.*



*"Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?"*

*Luke 15:4*

**Are YOU your SISTER'S keeper?**

**You ARE your sister's keeper.**

**WE are OUR sister's keeper!**



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